

## INSIGHT OF TEACHERS ON PROBLEMS OF STUDENTS IN ACQUIRING COMMUNICATIVE SKILL IN ENGLISH

By

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### ABSTRACT

*The study examined the insight of English Teacher towards students of standard XI in acquiring communicative skill in English. The main objective of the paper was to identify the problems of the students in acquiring communicative skill in English. The Normative survey method was adopted in the study. One hundred teachers were considered as a sample for the study. Problem inventory for the teacher was selected as a tool for the study. After establishing Reliability and validity of the tool, it was considered for the final study. Findings of the study is a significant association between the Male and Female teachers on the opinion of problems of the learners in Listening skill with respect to stress pattern, cohesive device, Distinctive sound, Intonation, Contextual meaning and Homophones. Communicative skill can be practiced in the classroom transaction by using role play, pandemonium, discussion, interaction, translated version of Tamil cinema, etc. Written communicative skill can be developed by conducting essay competition, preparing advertisement, preparing projects, etc.*

*Keywords: Communicative Skill, Acquisition of English, Error free Communication, Skimming and Scanning.*

### INTRODUCTION

Communicative skill in English is indispensable for the younger generation to ameliorate the skills of students and achieving the laudable opportunities to stand on the platform of globalization. It enables to understand the different cultures, various customs and habits. It encourages the learning of the technological applications for understanding the necessary details. Higher secondary is the turning point for the students in getting higher studies and fixes a good opportunity in life. Acquisition of English communicative skill ensures achieving good opportunity for any person. Even the students of plus one or plus two have insights, thoughts and ideas which cannot be transformed into proper construction of sentences. Singaravelu G. (2010) examined the problems of learning Rural English learners and some of his findings are coincided in the study. Finding the problems of the students of plus one in acquisition of communicative skill can be helpful to train the students of plus two for fear-free and errorless use of English, which may help the learners to achieve the

prosperous future in life. Studies such as those by Cathcart et al. (2006) and Adams (2004) reveal that in terms of oral presentations, students are much more confident with the content of the presentation than they are with their ability to effectively utilise the English language to convey their arguments and ideas. Adams (2004) found that many of the international students who took part in the study believed that "their pronunciation and grammar weaknesses might cause the audience to lose concentration" (Adams, 2004: 122). Moreover, international students often struggle with interpreting comments or questions by assessors or peers, again adding to the low levels of confidence and self belief that many international students share in relation to oral communication (Cathcart et al, 2006). Hence the researcher endeavours to identify the problems of the students of plus one in acquiring communicative skill in English through collecting the information from the teachers.

### 1. Statement of the Problem

Many students were able to speak English with

grammatical errors. Very few students used error-free communication. Students of Plus one had problems in acquiring communicative skill in English. The poor communicative skill of the students restricts to enter higher education.

## 2. Need of the Study

Communicative skill is the basic skill to score more marks and it paves way to attend the interviews in a favourable manner. Effective communicative skill helps them to face the competitive examinations and ensures to get a good opportunity. It assists to enrich the personality of the young learners. The higher scorers could not face the competition due to the incapability of spontaneous communication in English. To identify the problems of the Plus one student has been emerging needs, which can help the students face the interview and error free attractive articulation with fewer mistakes in communicative skill.

## 3. Review of Literature

Singaravelu, G. (2001) investigated on the Study of the Problems of Students of Higher Secondary Classes in Learning English as a Second Language. His objectives was (1) To identify and analyse the general problems of the students of higher secondary course in learning English as a second language in Thiruvavarur district; (2) to study the availability of general facilities and curriculum experiences provided by the teachers for learning English language; (3) to study the problems faced by the students in writing essays, usage of phrases and idioms, understanding stress shift, using conjunctions and sentence pattern; (4) to study whether there is any difference in the problems faced by the students in pronunciation, learning grammar of sentence pattern, habit of hearing news, rectifying the errors of exercises, memorisation without understanding, remedial teaching on the bases of different variables such as sex, locality and type of management; (5) to study whether there is any significant relationship between the opinion of the teachers on the problems faced by the students in pronunciation, understanding grammar, using punctuation marks, mother tongue interference, guidance of parents and different variables such as sex,

experience, locality and type of management. Descriptive normative survey approach was adopted for the study, which mainly focused on qualitative research. The Probability sample method was taken, through which 285 boys and 285 girls were selected from higher secondary schools in Thiruvavarur district. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted for comprehensive study. Major tools used in the study were Achievement test for the students; Questionnaire for the students; and Problem inventory for the teachers. The collected data were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively using basis statistics 't' test and chi-square. The findings of the study included, (1) Students of higher secondary in Thiruvavarur district had some specific problems in learning English as a second Language. (2) Students faced the problems in writing essays, phrases and idioms, using conjunctions and sentence pattern. (3) There was a significant relationship between the problems faced by the students in pronunciation, learning grammar, knowledge of sentence pattern, habit of hearing news, rectification of homework, memorisation without understanding, remedial teaching and different variables regarding sex, locality and type of management. (4) There was significant relationship between the opinion of the teachers on the problems faced by the student, in understanding grammar, using punctuation marks, mother tongue interference, guidance of parents and different variables such as sex, locality, experience and type of management.

Nishino, Takako (2008) attempted to promote higher achievement in English communicative skills among the secondary school students by urging teachers to use communicative activities. MEXT has also undertaken to achieve this goal by executing a 5-year Action Plan. This exploratory study investigates Japanese teachers' beliefs and practices regarding Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in their classrooms through a survey of 21 secondary school teachers. A questionnaire is provided to the student which consists of 17 statements with open and closed ended questions. 15 closed ended question and 3 open ended questions. Questionnaire prepared by Brown (2001) was adopted for the study. The results show

that in order to employ CLT in their classrooms, teachers feel that a change in classroom conditions is a prerequisite. The results also show that CLT is beginning to be employed at the local level. In order to delineate ways to help this small local change lead to real English education reform in Japan, a comprehensive investigation of the beliefs of a larger number of language teachers is necessary.

## 4. Objectives

1. To find out the problems of the students in acquiring the communicative skill in English at plus one level.
2. To find out whether there is any significant association between the Male and Female teachers on the opinion of problems of the learners in Listening skill with respect to stress pattern, Cohesive device, Distinctive sound, Intonation, Contextual meaning and Homophones.
3. To find out whether there is any significant association between the Male and Female teachers on the opinion of problems of the learners in Speaking skill with respect to Articulating sounds, Pronunciation, Mother-tongue interference, Vocabulary, Sequence of idea and sentence pattern.
4. To find out whether there is any significant association between the Male and Female teachers on the opinion of problems of the learners in Reading skill with respect to Lack of confidence, Words, Inferences, Meaning of sentence, Skimming and Scanning.
5. To find out whether there is any significant association between the Male and Female teachers on the opinion of problems of the learners in Writing skill with respect to problems in mechanics of writing, usage of grammar, Lack of accuracy, Sentence Structure, Cohesion and Lack of continuity.

## 5. Hypotheses

1. There is a significant association between the Male and Female teachers on the opinion of problems of the learners in Listening skill with respect to stress pattern, cohesive device, Distinctive sound, Intonation, Contextual meaning and Homophones.
2. There is a significant association between the Male

and Female teachers on the opinion of problems of the learners in Speaking skill with respect to Articulating sounds, Pronunciation, Mother-tongue interference, Vocabulary, Sequence of idea and sentence pattern.

3. There is a significant association between the Male and Female teachers on the opinion of problems of the learners in Reading skill with respect to Lack of confidence, Words, Inferences, Meaning of sentence, Skimming and Scanning.
4. There is a significant association between the Male and Female teachers on the opinion of problems of the learners in Writing skill with respect to problems in mechanics of writing, usage of grammar, Lack of accuracy, Sentence Structure, Cohesion and Lack of continuity.

## 6. Methodology

The Normative survey method was adopted in the study. Stratified random sampling technique was used for sample selection. One hundred post-graduate English teachers of Higher Secondary were taken up for the study. Problem inventory for the teachers was selected as a tool for the study. After establishing Reliability and validity of the tool which was considered for the final study.

### 6.1 Preparation of Problem Inventory for the Teachers

Identifying problems of the students in improving communicative English through teachers' opinions was substantiated by the researcher in the study. Most of the post-graduate English teachers were met by the researcher. Researcher consulted the teachers about the problems of the students in learning communicative English and efforts of the teachers to improve students' ability in learning communicative English. Then the researcher prepared a problem inventory for the teachers. It was administered after the acknowledgment of eminent scholars and experts. Twenty four items were taken for the study. Each item or statement of the inventory was designed to diagnose the problem of the students in acquiring Communicative skill in English.

### 6.2 Sex of the Teachers and Analysing Four Skills

Problems of the students in acquiring communicative English were analyzed through the opinions of Male and

Female experienced teachers in the four skills-Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Oral communication is considered to be a core aspect of employability (Knight and Yorke, 2006) .

## *6.2.1 Listening Skill*

The following items are related to the listening skill of the students in improving communicative skill measured through the opinionnaire of teachers .

- Stress pattern
- Cohesive device
- Distinctive sound
- Intonation
- Contextual meaning, and
- Homophones.

## *6.2.2 Speaking Skill*

The following items related to the speaking skill of the students in improving communicative skill in English were measured through the opinionnaire of teachers.

- Articulating sounds
- Pronunciation
- Mother-tongue interference
- Vocabulary
- Sequence of idea, and
- Sentence pattern.

## *6.2.3 Reading Skill*

The following items related to the reading skill of the students in improving communicative skill in English were measured through the opinionnaire of teachers.

- Lack of confidence
- Words
- Inferences
- Meaning of sentence
- Skimming and
- Scanning.

## *6.2.4 Writing Skill*

The following items related to the writing skill of the students in improving communicative skill in English were measured through the opinionnaire of teachers.

- Mechanics of writing
- Usage of grammar
- Lack of accuracy
- Sentence Structure
- Cohesion, and
- Lack of continuity.

## *6.3 Problem Inventory for the Teachers for Pilot Study*

In problem inventory for the teachers, twenty-five statements were included in the pilot study. It was used to collect data from the teachers regarding the students' problems in acquiring communicative skill in English. The researcher explained the purpose of the data collection to the teachers and requested to respond by putting tick mark ( ) against each item. It was graded under three point scale as follows;

- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree.

## *6.4 Reliability of Problem Inventory for the Teachers*

The problem inventory for the teachers was prepared by the researcher with great effort and care. The reliability of the problem inventory was seen through the equivalent group technique. The problem inventory was administered for twenty from the four types of schools at random. About 20 teachers were selected and the test was administered. Then the correlation co-efficient between the two groups were calculated and found to be 0.79.

## *6.5 Validity of the Problem Inventory used for the Teachers*

Problems inventory for the teachers was administered to identify the problems of the students in acquiring communicative skill in English from the opinion of the teachers. After the pilot study, the collected data from the teachers was given to the experts in the field of English education requesting their valuable suggestions and opinions regarding the suitability of the statement and the problem areas of the students. The opinions of experts were taken into consideration on the basis of remarks, some statements of the tool were re-worded and some

were deleted and modified. Twenty five items of the problem inventory were reduced to twenty four items.

## 6.6 Data Collection for the Final Study

Selected four types of twenty Higher secondary schools in Coimbatore District were consulted by the researcher for identifying the problems of the students in acquiring communicative skill in English at plus one level. The researcher approached Headmasters and the managements of the twenty higher secondary schools for collecting data and conducting achievement tests in English towards the students of plus one. The Researcher collected data from PG Teachers of English about the opinion on the problems of the students of plus one for acquiring communicative skill in English. Thus, data were collected for the study.

## 6.7 Testing of Hypotheses

### 6.7.1 Hypothesis:1

There is a significant association between the Male and Female teachers on the opinion of the problems of the learners in Listening skill with respect to stress pattern, cohesive device, Distinctive sound, Intonation, Contextual meaning and Homophones. Table 1

Statements	Sex	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total	Chi-square	Significant levels 0.05
Students face difficulty in recognizing the stress -pattern.	Male	12	16	4	32	6.22	Significant
	Female	30	19	19	68		
	Total	42	35	23	100		
Not able to recognize cohesive devices in spoken discourse.	Male	10	20	2	32	11.45	Significant
	Female	29	20	19	68		
	Total	39	40	21	100		
Difficulty in discriminating the distinctive sounds	Male	12	18	2	32	6.74	Significant
	Female	28	22	18	68		
	Total	40	40	20	100		
Understanding the intonation is difficult.	Male	23	9	0	32	13.78	Significant
	Female	30	17	21	68		
	Total	53	26	21	100		
Comprehending contextual meaning is easy	Male	20	11	1	32	9.82	Significant
	Female	30	18	20	68		
	Total	50	29	21	100		
Difficulty in recognizing homophones	Male	22	8	2	32	10.02	Significant
	Female	29	17	22	68		
	Total	51	25	24	100		

Table 1. Opinion of the Male and Female Teachers in Listening Skills of Stress Pattern, Cohesive Device, Distinctive Sound, Intonation, Contextual Meaning and Homophones

describes the Opinion of the teachers on the problems of the learners' Listening skill between Male and Female Teachers. The calculated chi square value are greater than the table value, 5.99 (Students face difficulty in recognizing the stress –pattern (6.22), Not able to recognize cohesive devices in spoken discourse (11.45), Difficulty in discriminating the distinctive sounds (6.74), Understanding the intonation is difficult (13.78), Comprehending contextual meaning is easy (9.82), and Difficulty in recognizing homophones (10.02)). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected at 0.5 level in recognizing the stress –pattern, not able to recognize cohesive devices in spoken discourse, Difficulty in discriminating the distinctive sounds, Understanding the intonation is difficult, Comprehending the contextual meaning is easy and Difficulty in recognizing homophones. Hence, there is a significant association between the Male and Female teachers on the opinion of problems of the learners in Listening skill with respect to stress pattern, cohesive device, Distinctive sound, Intonation, Contextual

Statements	Sex	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total	Chi-square	Significant levels 0.05
Very hard to articulate new sounds	Male	24	8	0	32	14.74	Significant
	Female	29	18	21	68		
	Total	53	26	21	100		
Pronouncing the word is difficult.	Male	22	9	1	32	12.65	Significant
	Female	28	17	23	68		
	Total	50	26	24	100		
Mother tongue interference affects the learners to speak fluently.	Male	22	10	0	32	12.30	Significant
	Female	28	22	18	68		
	Total	50	32	18	100		
Inadequate vocabularies make the learners difficult to speak fluently.	Male	19	13	0	32	9.42	Significant
	Female	25	14	19	68		
	Total	44	37	19	100		
Lack of sequence of ideas make it difficult to speak English.	Male	23	9	0	32	13.78	Significant
	Female	30	17	21	68		
	Total	53	26	21	100		
Sentence pattern of Mother tongue is not equal to Sentence pattern of English which hinders the communicative skill.	Male	25	7	0	32	13.17	Significant
	Female	31	19	18	68		
	Total	56	26	18	100		

Table 2. Opinion of the Male and Female Teachers in Speaking Skills of Articulating sounds, Pronunciation, Mother-tongue Interference, Vocabulary, Sequence of Idea and Sentence Pattern



meaning and Homophones.

## 6.7.2 Hypothesis: 2

There is a significant association between the Male and Female teachers on the opinion of problems of the learners in Speaking skill with respect to Articulating sounds, Pronunciation, Mother-tongue interference, Vocabulary, Sequence of idea and sentence pattern.

Table 2 describes the Opinion of the teachers on the problems of the learners' speaking skill between Male and Female Teachers. The calculated chi square value are greater than table value, 5.99 (Very hard to articulate new sounds (14.74), Pronouncing the word is difficult (12.65), Mother tongue interference affects the learners to speak fluently (12.30), Inadequate vocabularies make the learners difficult to speak fluently (9.42), Lack of sequence of ideas make it difficult to speak English (13.78), and Sentence pattern of Mother tongue is not equal to the Sentence pattern of English which hinders the communicative skill (13.17)). Hence, the null hypothesis is

Statements	Sex	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total	Chi-square	Significant levels 0.05
Lack of confidence to read on their own.	Male	13	15	4	32	6.20	Significant
	Female	32	19	17	68		
	Total	45	34	21	100		
Too much emphasis upon the study of separate words (they should be able to read group of words).	Male	14	15	3	32	6.07	Significant
	Female	45	15	8	68		
	Total	59	30	11	100		
Difficulty to draw inferences (not stated directly in the text) from what they have read.	Male	20	12	0	32	16.77	Significant
	Female	22	26	20	68		
	Total	42	38	20	100		
Reading without understanding the meaning of the sentence.	Male	18	12	2	32	8.01	Significant
	Female	24	24	20	68		
	Total	42	36	22	100		
Skimming (finding the main idea) is difficult for the learners.	Male	21	11	0	32	15.8	Significant
	Female	21	27	20	68		
	Total	42	38	20	100		
Scanning (finding the specific idea) is difficult for the learners.	Male	22	10	0	32	17.09	Significant
	Female	22	24	22	68		
	Total	44	37	22	100		

Table 3. Opinion of the Male and Female Teachers in Reading Skills of to Lack of Confidence, Words, Inferences, Meaning of Sentence, Skimming and Scanning

rejected at 0.5 level in Very hard to articulate new sounds, Pronouncing the word is difficult , Mother tongue interference affects the learners to speak fluently, Inadequate vocabularies make the learners difficult to speak fluently, Lack of sequence of ideas make it difficult to speak English and Sentence pattern of Mother tongue is not equal to Sentence pattern of English which hinders the communicative skill. Hence, there is a significant association between the Male and Female teachers on the opinion of problems of the learners in Speaking skill with respect to Articulating sounds, Pronunciation, Mother-tongue interference, Vocabulary, Sequence of idea and sentence pattern.

## 6.7.3 Hypothesis: 3

There is a significant association between the Male and Female teachers on the opinion of the problems of the learners in Reading skill with respect to Lack of confidence, Words, Inferences, Meaning of sentence, Skimming and Scanning.

Statements	Sex	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total	Chi-square	Significant levels 0.05
Lack of knowledge about elementary mechanics of writing (spelling, capitalization, punctuation).	Male	15	8	9	32	6.20	Significant
	Female	37	23	8	68		
	Total	52	31	17	100		
Difficulty to use grammar with ease	Male	12	13	7	32	6.07	Significant
	Female	28	29	11	68		
	Total	40	42	18	100		
Lack of fluency and accuracy in writing.	Male	16	7	9	32	16.77	Significant
	Female	31	18	19	68		
	Total	47	25	28	100		
Difficulty in constructing sentence structure.	Male	18	11	3	32	8.01	Significant
	Female	34	23	11	68		
	Total	52	34	14	100		
Information's and ideas are not linked together (cohesion).	Male	18	11	3	32	15.8	Significant
	Female	45	15	8	68		
	Total	63	26	11	100		
Lack of continuity of senses and sequence of ideas.	Male	20	9	3	32	17.09	Significant
	Female	34	26	8	68		
	Total	54	35	11	100		

Table 4. Opinion of the Male and Female Teachers in Writing Skills of Problems in Mechanics of Writing, Usage of Grammar, Lack of Accuracy, Sentence Structure, Cohesion and Lack of Continuity

Table 3 describes the Opinion of the teachers on the problems of the learners' reading skill between Male and Female Teachers. The calculated chi square value are greater than table value, 5.99 (Lack of confidence to read on their own (6.20), Too much emphasis upon the study of separate words (they should be able to read group of words) (6.07), Difficulty to draw inferences (not stated directly in the text) from what they have read (16.77), Reading without understanding the meaning of the sentence (8.01), Skimming (finding the main idea) is difficult for the learners (15.80), and Scanning (finding the specific idea) is difficult for the learners (17.09). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected at 0.5 level in Lack of confidence to read on their own. Too much emphasis upon the study of separate words (they should be able to read group of words), Difficulty to draw inferences (not stated directly in the text) from what they have read. Reading without understanding the meaning of the sentence, Skimming (finding the main idea) is difficult for the learners, Scanning (finding the specific idea) is difficult for the learners. Hence, there is a significant association between the Male and Female teachers on the opinion of problems of the learners in Reading skill with respect to Lack of confidence, Words, Inferences, Meaning of sentence, Skimming and Scanning.

## 6.7.4 Hypothesis: 4

There is a significant association between the Male and Female teachers on the opinion of problems of the learners in Writing skill with respect to problems in mechanics of writing, usage of grammar, Lack of accuracy, Sentence Structure, Cohesion and Lack of continuity.

Table 4 describes the opinion of the teachers on the problems of the learners' writing skill between male and female teachers. The calculated chi-square value is less than the table value in lack of knowledge about elementary mechanics of writing (5.46), formations and ideas are not linked together (2.38), difficulty to use grammar with ease (0.64), lack of fluency and accuracy in writing (0.26), difficulty in constructing sentence structure (0.42), and lack of continuity of senses and sequence of ideas (1.51). Hence, the null hypothesis is

accepted at 0.5 level. Hence, there is no significant association between the Male and Female teachers on the opinion of problems of the learners' Writing skill with respect to the problems in mechanics of writing, usage of grammar, Lack of accuracy, Sentence Structure, Cohesion and Lack of continuity.

## 7. Findings

The following are the findings of the study.

1. There is a significant association between the Male and Female teachers on the opinion of the problems of the learners in Listening skill with respect to stress pattern, cohesive device, Distinctive sound, Intonation, Contextual meaning and Homophones.
2. There is a significant association between the Male and Female teachers on the opinion of the problems of the learners in Speaking skill with respect to Articulating sounds, Pronunciation, Mother-tongue interference, Vocabulary, Sequence of idea and sentence pattern.
3. There is a significant association between the Male and Female teachers on the opinion of the problems of the learners in Reading skill with respect to Lack of confidence, Words, Inferences, Meaning of sentence, Skimming and Scanning.
4. There is a significant association between the Male and Female teachers on the opinion of the problems of the learners in Writing skill with respect to problems in mechanics of writing, usage of grammar, Lack of accuracy, Sentence Structure, Cohesion and Lack of continuity.

## 8. Educational Implications

The followings were the educational implications of the study,

1. Communicative skill may be practiced in the classroom transaction by using role play, pandemonium, discussion, interaction, translated version of Tamil cinema, etc.
2. Written communicative skill can be developed by conducting essay competition, preparing advertisement, preparing projects, etc.
3. Selected Audio-video cassette can be displayed.

4. Encouraging the students to read newspapers and storybooks are recommended.
5. Mock interview can be practiced by the invited eminent professors.
6. Encouraging the students to hear and write the news from BBC.

## Conclusion

The present study confirms the problems of the students existing in Listening, Speaking and Writing. Lack of proficiency in three skills of English language students face the hurdles in acquiring communicative English at plus on level. The opinion of the teachers related to the above mentioned skills in English were found out, and the opinion of the teachers on the problems of the learners in Listening skill due to failure of strengthening the stress pattern, cohesive device, distinctive sound, intonation, contextual meaning and homophones. Articulating sounds, Pronunciation, Mother-tongue interference, Vocabulary, Sequence of idea and sentence pattern are responsible for the problems of the learners in speaking skill. It substantiated that the problems of the learners in Reading skill causes of Lack of confidence, Words, Inferences, Meaning of sentence, Skimming and Scanning. Difficulty to use grammar with ease, fluency and accuracy in writing, difficulty in constructing sentence structure, lack of continuity of senses and sequence of ideas are to be rectified among the learners to ameliorate written communicative skill in English. Holliday, Hyde and Kullman state, "Language is a bridge between people, but it is also a wall, which divides people" (Holliday, Hyde and Kullman, 2004: 184).

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